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THE

Commonweal

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VOICES OF LIBERTY

by Leslie C. Stevens

POLITICAL PROSPECTS

MORE OF THE SAME

by William V. Shannon

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And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

St. Luke 2:7

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THE
Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-THIRD YEAR OF PUBLICATION

week by week

CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS

THE DRIVE to "put Christ back in Christmas" has become an annual and accepted event in American life. True, there are still plenty of Christmas cards decorated with Scotty dogs, reindeer, and the like. But there does seem to be much more public attention to religion than there used to be. In many communities Nativity scenes will have a prominent place this year, and Christmas cards with religious themes are much in evidence. Anyone who is opposed to the modern drift toward secularism must applaud such positive results, but, inevitably, the question arises as to whether there are limits beyond which such efforts should not go. We think there are, and that those who ignore these limits do more harm than good.

The village of Ossining, New York, for example, is going to have a community crèche this year. Unlike the Nativity scenes in many other towns, however, Ossining's crèche has something of a semi-official character. The committee to raise funds for the project is headed by the town's Mayor, and, more importantly, the crèche itself will be erected on the lawn of the public high school, rather than in the window of a local department store or some other privately owned place.

All this did not come about without considerable public and private controversy. A volunteer committee originally received permission for the erection of the crèche from the Board of Education. Then a number of citizens of the village protested to the State Department of Education, which in turn suggested to the local Board that another site be chosen. The Board met again, and by a split vote it rescinded its original permission for the use of the school grounds. (Afterward, the Board president explained: "The question is whether the Board would be abrogating the clearcut separation which the state law demands between church and state.")

At this point it might have seemed to an outsider that a decision to select some other site would have solved the whole problem and avoided considerable controversy. But by this time opinions had hardened, and many residents began to treat the issue as if it meant being for or against God. The decision to deny the use of school grounds for the project came in for heavy attack, with several local ministers among those who were severely critical. Said one such minister: "The action of the Board belies the simple fact that we live in a Christian country, and, I thought, in a Christian community."

In the face of such criticism, members of the Board began to have third thoughts. Once again they met to consider the entire matter, and this time they voted 4-to-3 to return to their original decision and allow the crèche to be erected on school property, despite the opposition.

ONE CANNOT, we think, be doctrinaire in either direction about questions like those posed by the Ossining affair. The secularist who would raise an "absolute wall" between the State and the principles of religion and morality is wrong, and dangerously so. But pushing through a proposal to erect a Nativity scene on public property, and against considerable opposition, as was done in this case, does not seem to us to be the answer.

If America is, as the local minister put it, "a Christian country," it is also a country with a long and valuable tradition of official non-preference for any one religion. This tradition was developed against a historical background of religious strife, and it is one we cherish. It should not be taken to mean that the State is unconscious of or indifferent to the vital role of religion. But it does mean that no religion should seek for itself special place or

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privilege, and it does mean that the State must not encourage or promote one religion over others.

One may argue that these limitations apply only to the Federal government, that a school district is not the same thing as the State, but is more in the nature of a quasi-autonomous local group acting as an auxiliary for the parents in educating their children. Nonetheless, in this case the difference does not seem to be pertinent. The American tradition in these matters is too important for it to be lightly dismissed or easily evaded. In a pluralistic society, some citizens are bound to feel that any decision like this one favors one religion over others and thus constitutes a violation of the American tradition.

At stake in Ossining was the erection of the Nativity scene—a central symbol of Christianity, but a symbol nonetheless. And in this case, as in so many others similar to it, the symbol seems to have become confused with reality. Before the controversy was ended, proponents of erecting the Nativity scene at the local high school seemed to see the issue not as one involving a prudential political decision, but as a contest between good and evil, between religion and irreligion. They acted as if a victory for their side would be a great triumph for Christianity. And in the end they won.

But what have been the actual results of the dispute at Ossining? The victory, it seems to us, went not so much to Christianity as to a dangerous kind of formalism—a formalism which sees America as somehow more Christian if only the familiar symbols are displayed as publicly and as "officially" as possible. The Nativity scene, which is a hallowed symbol of the birth of Christ, has become in Ossining a symbol of community dissension and wrangling. Tempers have been aroused, neighbor has turned against neighbor, wounds have been opened which will be long in healing—and all in the name of the Prince of Peace. In short, like too many such victories in the past, the "victory" for Christianity at Ossining has a hollow look to it.

NEXT WEEK

DOROTHY DAY writes about Abbé Pierre in the Christmas Number.

"Here is a man of compassion, a priest of great heart who holds out his arms to all suffering ones. 'Out of the fullness of the heart, the mouth speaketh,' and we know what is in Abbé Pierre's heart."

UNDER REPAIR

REVIVING our alliance with Britain at this precarious moment will not be easy. Much of the blame for the Conservatives' lamentable miscalculations on Suez has fallen upon the United States. Withdrawal of the Anglo-French expeditionary force under UN pressure appears to the British as the culmination of a series of bad moves urged if not instigated by their American allies: departure from Palestine, the Abadan refinery, the Sudan and the Suez Canal itself. Our vacillations in Suez policy in the past few months proved particularly exasperating, while in this country the British Suez move provoked widespread revulsion.

Economic assistance is one of the chief instruments by which we hope that these wounds may be bound up and our alliance restored, as far as that is now possible, to its pre-Suez strength. The British themselves are taking certain measures to defend the pound, threatened by the fall of national gold and dollar reserves below the two-billion-dollar mark for the first time in four years. Increased duties on oil imports have already set the retail price of gasoline as high as ninety-two cents a gallon. The British Government is also pledging itself not to devalue the pound below its present level.

Even more sweeping are plans to review defense policies from the point of view of costs, to see how much of the government program of developing power for private industry can be continued and to explore the possibilities of raising the income tax. As it is now, the rate is 42½ per cent on individual incomes of less than $5,600, with even higher rates for higher income brackets.

There is also some talk of a renewed drive for British exports to the United States and Canada. But it would be a feat simply to sustain these exports at their recent level—in view of the post-Suez loss of productive capacity and shipping space, the greater cost of raw materials and the growth of protectionism in America (reflected by our recent curtailing of our import quota for British woolens). The automobile market is simply too competitive, while Americans can be expected to drink just so much Scotch.

Besides such austerities and whatever added cultivation of the Canadian and American markets is feasible, Britain obviously stands in need of wholesale financial aid. The biggest single injection is to be withdrawal, with American approval, of more than a billion dollars from the International Monetary Fund. And little opposition is expected in Congress, or in Canada, to the cancelling of

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Britain's December interest payment. Once again the British should manage to weather a storm largely, if not entirely, of their own making.

Bailing out the British from the economic consequences of their short-lived descent upon Suez represents but a small part of shoring up an alliance that is basic for the defense of the West. The two nations have, somehow, to work out a basic agreement as to lines of future policy, to prepare for joint action in certain contingencies, to provide means of keeping lines of full communication unbroken, to proclaim certain common objectives aiming at the security, just treatment and national self-development of the peoples of the world. Much resentment remains to be assuaged in both countries. Perhaps persistent labor in concert for the many ends we have in common will in time restore the warmth of what is a natural friendship.

MONTGOMERY AND CLINTON

IN EVERY struggle against oppression certain names stand out to commemorate hard battles fought and won. When the time comes to write the history of desegregation in this country, high on the list of memorable names will be Montgomery, Alabama and, very probably, Clinton, Tennessee.

In the tremendous public meeting during which the Negroes of Montgomery celebrated their successful, year-long bus boycott, the prevailing tone was one of confidence in ultimate victory. Unwilling or unable to recognize the inevitable, however, State Senator Englehart told a Citizens Council that "the meeting is basking in the guise of love and brotherhood and in celebration of a victory. Let me tell you they are as close to victory as I am to the Supreme Court." About all one can say of such a statement is that the misguided Senator vastly overrates his proximity to the Supreme Court. Montgomery has not only achieved a stunning victory, it has passed its lesson on to many other cities. And it will remain a lesson and inspiration until desegregation is achieved.

Clinton, Tennessee, may well attain an equal significance. The high school in this small mountain town of 4000 had been segregated until this fall when twelve Negro children enrolled. Their first days in the school were uneventful. The citizens of Clinton were willing—and able—to put their respect for law and order before their professed preference for segregation.

But John Kasper, by now well-known as a morbid defender of segregation, arrived in Clinton and roused the town to violence. National Guard troops were called in and Mr. Kasper was charged with inciting a riot. After he was acquitted he returned with his followers all the stronger. When a white Baptist minister, Rev. Paul W. Turner, escorted some of the Negro children to school he was set upon by a small group of Clinton citizens. This incident set off a train of actions. Sixteen persons involved were arrested and, after an appeal by the school board, Attorney General Herbert Brownell, Jr., announced that anyone who worked against school integration in Clinton would be prosecuted by the Justice Department. The principal of the high school now foresees an orderly school year.

Clinton thus suggests not only what is likely to take place in many Southern towns when desegregation is actually attempted, but it underlines the force, moral as well as legal, that the Federal Government can use to prevent violence and to see that the ruling of the Supreme Court is duly enforced. Both Montgomery and Clinton show that desegregation is inevitable, that it will be accepted even by those who do not welcome it. They also show that violence need not be part of the price we pay for it.

THE CRIME OF AIRMAN CUPP

TWENTY MONTHS after he had enlisted in the U.S. Air Force, Orville Cupp was sentenced by a court-martial to dishonorable discharge and a term of five and one-half years in prison. His crime was refusal to salute his commanding officers and to serve further as a gunnery instructor. Two months before, Airman Cupp had become a member of Jehovah's Witnesses, a sect which enjoins, on religious grounds, the type of refusal practiced by Airman Cupp.

The confrontation of the individual conscience with the demands of the State can pose some acute and complex problems; the case of Orville Cupp, however, would hardly seem to be one of them. It could have been solved more simply; it should have been solved without punishing a man for following the dictates of his conscience.

Certainly there were obvious precedents which the members of the court-martial might have kept in mind. The Supreme Court has declared, for instance, that the children of Jehovah's Witnesses cannot be forced, within a public school, to salute the American flag, because such an act violates their religious principles. In time of war, this country recognizes the rights of the conscientious objector by giving him a non-military function rather than

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attempting to force him to bear arms, even in the defense of his country.

Implicit in such decisions is the clear realization that the State as such has no concern with *how* the individual has formed his conscience. The only pertinent fact is that it is his conscience, and is to be respected so long as it does not constitute a clear and present danger to the common good.

Thus, the officers who tried Airman Cupp may have felt that his conscience was formed in error out of religious ignorance or just plain religious "cussedness," as a writer once described the source of many Witness practices. But the dictates of Airman Cupp's conscience should have been respected, no matter how erroneous the judges thought it. They might, not surprisingly, have also felt that Airman Cupp's erroneous conscience prevented his being an effective soldier; in that case, they should have recommended him for honorable discharge rather than have treated him like a criminal for placing his conscience above the Air Force Manual.

We noticed that, on Human Rights Day, many public figures had a great deal to say about God and freedom, about religion and the dignity of the individual. We hope some of these speakers will become interested in the case of Airman Cupp. And we sincerely hope that some of the thousands of Americans who urged their Congressmen to vote "In God we trust" as the national motto will take up their pens again, this time in behalf of Orville Cupp, who may be wondering about that motto.

UN AND HUNGARY

THE RECENT action whereby the puppet regime of Janos Kadar refused to permit the Secretary-General of the UN to visit Hungary was a piece of callous trumpery. Mr. Kadar knows and fears what the UN Secretary-General would report upon his return from that blood-drenched land—that the present regime has the support of Soviet armed might but not that of the Hungarian people.

Even more deplorable—and dangerous—than the action of the Kadar regime is the argument on which it is based: the UN has no legal right to concern itself with the situation in Hungary because Soviet forces are there at the request and with the approval of the Hungarian government. But the Hungarian government which requested Soviet troops was the government set up by Soviet troops on November 3 and 4, when Janos Kadar rode into Budapest in a Soviet tank after Soviet arms had deposed the legitimate Prime Minister, Imre Nagy. In effect, the Hungarian argument is that Soviet armed intervention in Hungary is all right because Kadar, the puppet put in and propped up by the Soviet, says it is.

Such a position obviously represents a direct challenge, not only to the moral authority, but also to the political effectiveness of the United Nations. For Kadar's reasons for bypassing the UN, although delivered from Budapest, were dictated in Moscow, and constitute a formula for naked aggression. It claims, in effect, that any powerful nation may conquer a smaller one if only it sets up a puppet regime which will then approve of the conquest. It is an attempt to revive, within the frame-work of the UN, the Hitlerian pattern of conquest by Quislings.

Unless this cynical formula for aggression is challenged and checked within the UN, the world may see the formula soon applied to Syria, Jordan or Burma. For this reason, the UN must continue to search for means to intervene in Hungary; it must, also, by the most decisive moves feasible, show its rejection of the argument by which Kadar has rejected such intervention. The first of such moves might well be refusal to recognize the right of Kadar's representative to the UN to speak or to vote in the General Assembly until Kadar recognizes the right of the Secretary-General to visit Hungary at the urgent request of the United Nations.

AMENDING RULE 22

IRONICALLY, the filibuster procedure, permitted under our political system in order to prevent tyrannizing by a majority, has come to be identified with obstructionism in Congress against bills for civil rights. There is, nevertheless, a lot to be said for the idea that on any issue on which a minority is determined enough, that minority should have extra opportunities to defend its case.

Senate Rule 22, adopted in March, 1917, provides that two-thirds of the entire Senate must vote to close debate on a bill before cloture can be obtained. This represents a majority extremely hard to obtain on controversial issues. According to a proposal to be made January 3, as soon as the new Congress opens, debate could be limited by a two-thirds vote after two days, or by a simple majority vote after fifteen days—which would afford minorities ample leeway for full-dress presentation. The reasonableness of this proposal and the repute of the Senators from both parties who sponsor it commend it to the widest public encouragement.

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Voice of Liberty

"THE DISSATISFACTION WITH COMMUNISM EVIDENCED IN THE SATELLITES IS AN INDICATION OF WHAT CAN HAPPEN IN THE MORE DIFFICULT CASE OF SOVIET RUSSIA ITSELF"

LESLIE C. STEVENS

IT IS difficult, without having lived in the Soviet Union, to appreciate the extent of the control that is exercised over communications. All books, bookshops, newspapers, magazines, circulars, publications of all sorts, motion pictures, lectures, speeches, theaters, radio, television, billboards, all means of public communication are controlled by the Party. All typewriters, mimeograph machines and their equivalents are registered and their owners and uses are known. All of this adds up to an unprecedented suppression of freedom, a widespread oppression.

Now I have seen enough of Russia to convince me that the regime does not oppress merely for the sake of oppression. Although its actions often seem to us to border on the pathological, I do not believe that they can be dismissed by simply regarding the leaders as madmen. What is it then that causes this extreme preoccupation with control over all communications?

The answer lies in the fact that the loyalty of the Soviet peoples cannot be commanded by fear alone, even when leavened by prestige and an increasing degree of material wellbeing. Loyalty that is dependable in crisis must be based on intellectual respect and moral values. Communism attempts to provide the moral value in its promise of the ultimate good of mankind, and this oft-betrayed promise is founded on quicksand. At best, Communism promises to achieve paradise on earth through totalitarianism, which subordinates all present human and spiritual values to unlimited and unchecked power in the hands, not even of the Party, but of the Party leaders, justifying this monstrosity in the name of a completely materialistic human rationality.

The great weakness of this scheme lies not only in the fact that even materialistic human reason can readily reject Communism, but also in the heartening fact that most men, including the Soviet peoples, have moral and spiritual values that transcend purely materialistic logic. The fully developed totalitarian regime knows this fact, and further realizes that the regime itself cannot possibly survive in an atmosphere of true freedom of thought. Any significant relinquishing of the thought control exercised by the Soviet regime would lead to its own destruction, and there is not the slightest indication that the Party intends to do away with itself.

As amply verified by refugees, it is difficult to think things through alone and unaided by the stimulus of other minds. The monopoly of communications in Russia approaches genuine thought control in that it attempts to deprive the people of information and data on which their minds might feed. Only one version, one interpretation is given of everything, and that is the version of the regime. It is very significant that every slight relaxation in the direction of freedom of expression has been hastily withdrawn.

YET THERE is one great vulnerability in the remarkable control which is exercised over all communications—radio broadcasts which originate beyond the boundaries of the Communist lands can neither be controlled nor obliterated by the Party. The importance to the regime of such broadcasts is indicated by the extensive, expensive and elaborate jamming to which the Communists alone resort. This effort makes reception difficult but far from impossible.

Short wave receivers in the hands of the people might be confiscated were it not for the fact that the regime must preserve a fictitious face of freedom for its peoples. Similarly, listening to broadcasts from abroad is not a crime, even though it is not a healthy activity for anyone who expects to prosper under the regime. In the last analysis the regime must depend on coercion to maintain the loyalty of its subjects in the face of the truth, and the truth is that the Soviet peoples can find no real and permanent solution to their problems until the totalitarian dictatorship is overthrown.

Government-sponsored radios such as the Voice of America and BBC take excellent advantage of this situation, yet they are subject to serious limitations. Since governments are responsible for them, their power sphere is the portrayal of the true conditions, motives and viewpoints of the West which are distorted and falsified by the Soviet regime to its own citizens, rather

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Vice-Admiral Leslie C. Stevens (Ret.), long associated with the American Committee for Liberation which supports Radio Liberation, died shortly after writing this article. *R.I.P.*

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than interference with the internal affairs of another nation in peacetime. Moreover, the Soviet citizen, knowing that his own government never puts out information simply to inform but does so to further its own governmental ends, tends to regard other governments in the same light. The nature of the Soviet citizen is complex and contradictory, and perhaps, in the present state of Western knowledge, he can be fully understood only by his own kind.

Contrary to what the Communists would have us believe, however, their indoctrination of the young does not produce a new type of Soviet man, a robot who will blindly and loyally follow their bidding—as the youth of Hungary and Poland have so bravely shown. Although accompanied by a cautious system of rewards, coercion, both open and veiled, is a necessary feature of the totalitarian regime, whether that regime be headed by Stalin or by his successors. As a result, the internal history of the Soviet Union from its inception presents a continuing scene of antagonism between the peoples and their rulers, carefully suppressed and kept in hand by the regime, but attested to by the varying totalitarian measures which the regime must use and which continue to touch everyone in that vast land. There are hundreds of thousands of individuals who have escaped from it into the free world, most of them when the last great war provided opportunity.

These émigrés from the Soviet Union, still filled with devotion for the best interests of their homeland, see clearly the vulnerability of the regime in its incomplete control of all communications. It is they who can most legitimately utilize the resulting opportunity under a tradition of freedom which the Soviet Union cannot well violate beyond its own borders. Moreover, the Russians have a peculiar pride (or perhaps a bristling inferiority complex) which makes communications addressed to them in the name of "our" land and "our" army more acceptable than those offered by strangers and outsiders.

SINCE March, 1953, the émigré station Radio Liberation has been broadcasting around the clock to the homeland and to Soviet personnel in the satellites. Its effort is made possible by a private committee of Americans incorporated under the name of The American Committee for Liberation, made up of individuals with some knowledge of the internal Soviet scene who recognize the community of interest between the peoples of Soviet Russia and America and believe that the best interests of those peoples will be fulfilled only when the totalitarian dictatorship comes to an end.

The goal of liberation for the Soviet peoples cannot be attained by irresponsible urgings to revolt, when revolt would only be suppressed by the monopoly of armed force under the control of the regime. Moreover, the Soviet peoples have long been able to live with their regime, much as they might prefer another.

In actual fact, the Soviet population covers the entire spectrum from those who are bitterly and irrevocably opposed to the regime to those who accept it completely with all its implications. No one, not even the Party leaders, knows the percentage of people who can be assigned to various shadings of the spectrum, but there is every reason to believe that the overwhelming majority of the population falls between these two extremes. The bulk of the population accepts some of the principles of the regime, particularly the social benefits they have received, and explains or justifies its ideology.

As a result of propaganda conditioning this most numerous segment is seldom aware of the role of totalitarianism in what they do and do not accept. It is apt to attribute abnormal, unwise and unfair things to incapable or unwilling public servants, which, of course, gives one reason for the denunciation of Stalin. This segment would like to get rid of all that they regard as perversions of Communism, but seldom realizes that if this were achieved, the regime would collapse. Although disliking many aspects of the regime, they identify themselves with it, and do not realize that what they dislike is inherent in its real nature. It is largely to this great segment, which includes many in the Party itself, that Radio Liberation's broadcasts are directed.

These people are proud of much and believe in much, so their system cannot be attacked indiscriminately, but only by discussing specific inadequacies, injustices and failures of the regime and showing that they are direct and inevitable results of the system under which the listeners live, contrasted with the alternative of how similar circumstances work out in a free society. Resentment often accompanies a dwelling upon the material superiority of life in the West. The Soviet citizen is capable of great sacrifice, and he does not live by bread alone.

Advertising techniques, slanted information and "hardhitting" propaganda have no place in what Radio Liberation attempts to do—to raise doubts in the mind of the individual who believes himself loyal, to overcome the destruction of individuality at which the regime aims, and to give the Russian citizen the materials for independent thought which he has been denied. The Soviet citizen is weary of all the rubber stamps of propaganda, and has a profound distrust of them. He can only be addressed as an equal, with sincerity and dignity, as a friend to a friend who has something in common.

To do this requires an intimate knowledge of Soviet life, whose conditions are vastly different from those under which we live, and of the resulting habits of thought, prejudices, likes and dislikes, fears, traumas, pressures and coercions of which he himself is often not fully aware. My own conversations in Russia with

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Soviet citizens were usually marked by a variety of ready-made answers with which their conditioning had supplied them, and it was remarkable how the individual was shaken when those ready-made answers were themselves answered. Since broadcasting is not a two-way conversation, it needs to know and controvert those ready-made answers or its efforts are wasted.

A WIDE variety of presentation is used by Radio Liberation. In its news broadcasts it attempts to fill in the gaps that have been deliberately left by Soviet communications, and it has often achieved scoops in providing its audience with the first news of important happenings even within the Soviet Union. It tells what can be done by the listeners without endangering their safety, and it presents many detailed programs of special interest to varying sections of the population, showing that it is genuinely interested in and competent to speak to all, whether they be soldiers, industrial workers, peasants, bureaucrats or intelligentsia. The special occasions which are so often used by the regime as hooks on which to hang propaganda provide opportunities that are even better for the purposes of Radio Liberation, which made brilliant use of Moscow University's bicentennial, the Soviet Writers' Congress, and the seventy-fifth anniversary of the death of Dostoyevsky, with whose writings the Party has had much difficulty.

Religious broadcasts are, of course, a continuing feature of Radio Liberation. They deal with the spiritual and ethical values which materialism denies, and are put in terms which will be acceptable to the Soviet listener, Orthodox, Uniate, Moslem or whatever he may be, and which disturb the consciences of those who have come to believe the Party's atheistic propaganda.

The Soviet regime tells its peoples that Radio Liberation is made up of traitors in the pay of the West. The very nature of Radio Liberation's broadcasts demonstrates the contrary. Not only are they filled with a love for the homeland and the deepest regard for its happiness, but they are free to criticize the West and often do so. There is no playing down or distorting of unpleasant facts, but their true significance and meaning are also revealed.

Several million short wave receivers are in the hands of Soviet citizens, and the new five-year plan calls for about double this number. Their distribution is higher in the hands of the more privileged, but the spectrum of relative loyalty or disaffection, except for the very top, has much less to do with privilege than one might suppose. In Soviet Russia, where so much is suppressed, the number of people who get their information at second and third-hand is usually much greater than those who get it direct.

THERE ARE many motives which lead Soviet citizens to take the risk of listening to programs of the nature and quality of those sent them over Radio Liberation by their self-exiled countrymen abroad. Those towards the disaffected end of the spectrum can be expected to listen for encouragement and comradeship, or for documentation of what they have come to believe or suspect. Throughout the entire spectrum there are many who listen out of curiosity. The lure of forbidden fruit is very marked in all suppressive regimes, but seems to be particularly developed in the Russian. Others, including many near the loyalty end of the spectrum, listen because of intellectual interest, and still others because they believe in truth or in human freedom.

A numerous and most important class of listener is drawn from those whose duties require listening, such as monitors, personnel in the huge jamming apparatus, propaganda workers and officials and Party members who must know what the enemy is saying in order to counter it. This class has repeatedly produced refugees from the Soviet Union who have attributed their flight to Radio Liberation, and similar cases have appeared from among those having access to radios for other purposes, such as personnel of ships, army tanks, government automobiles and radio manufacturing and repair facilities.

It is, of course, very difficult to estimate accurately the effectiveness of Radio Liberation, because of the ultimate nature of its aims. Yet through many channels there has come a steady flow of positive information testifying that its broadcasts are heard and approved by those for whom they are intended. The fact that the Soviet press and Soviet radio call attention to its existence by denouncing it is convincing.

The dissatisfaction with Communism which has been evidenced in connection with the revolts of the satellites against Soviet domination is an indication of what can happen in the more difficult case of Soviet Russia itself. The ultimate goal of liberation for the peoples of the USSR may come sooner than we think, for the capabilities of that country are more obvious to us than are its weaknesses.

No matter how long the struggle, however, the effort of Radio Liberation is daily a powerful factor for peace in this atomic world, since it acts directly to decrease the totalitarian dictatorship's willingness to send an unreliable citizenry into war.

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More of the Same

WILLIAM V. SHANNON

IT IS the custom of political observers to interpret the outcome of a national election as a significant turning point in the life of the two major political parties or, more portentously, as the end of a political era. It seems rather more likely, however, that the 1956 election signified only the continued suspension of political change; it was a victory for drift and the status quo.

Mr. Eisenhower has variously interpreted his success as a triumph for "Modern Republicanism" and a mandate to continue the modernization of his party. Mr. Lyndon Johnson, the Democratic majority leader in the Senate, has viewed the Democratic success in the Congressional elections as an endorsement of his "moderate" policies. Northern Democrats, on the other hand, have concluded from Mr. Stevenson's defeat that a reordering of those policies is now required.

These respective conclusions seem equally dubious. It is undoubtedly true, as liberal Democrats now contend, that Mr. Eisenhower's extraordinary immunity from direct personal attack during the past four years contributed to his impressive victory at the polls, but the very character and dimensions of that victory defeat the argument, for this was not an election in which issues were decisive.

Mr. Eisenhower, for example, carried Tennessee four years ago by the slim margin of two thousand votes. Despite his attack on the Tennessee Valley Authority as a specimen of "creeping socialism" and the long and acrimonious controversy over the Dixon-Yates contract, he again carried Tennessee this year and by a somewhat larger majority. Eight years ago, the farmers of the Midwest revolted against Thomas E. Dewey because of the mere prospective danger that his farm policies posed to their welfare. In 1956, after four years in which their incomes had dropped by one-fourth and the Administration's farm policies had seemed widely unpopular, the farmers nevertheless ignored what was thought to be an actual rather than a potential danger to their welfare and voted for Mr. Eisenhower by comfortable majorities. Again, in the Northwest, Mr. Eisenhower's "partnership policy" of power development may have injured local Republican candidates but had no serious impact on his own strength.

Mr. Shannon, Washington correspondent for the N.Y. *Post*, is a frequent contributor.

From these and other regional voting patterns, one can only conclude that the people did not make their choice for President in terms of normal economic or bloc interests. To suggest that voters did not identify specific unpopular Administration policies with the President is to underrate their intelligence; Democratic orators throughout the campaign reiterated that Secretary Benson and former Secretary McKay were only the President's "hired men" and that he was ultimately responsible for their actions. The voters to whom these appeals were directed were not unaware of this identification; they simply, in large measure, ignored it.

The choice of a President under our system of government is not usually a referendum on issues or a contest between parties. It is a popularity contest. The voters choose that candidate in whom they repose confidence and trust. In Mr. Eisenhower, the Republicans had a candidate of uncommon charismatic qualities. With him, they could hardly lose.

WHAT the President calls "Modern Republicanism" scored modest successes in the election. The victories of Jacob Javits in New York and John Sherman Cooper and Thruston Morton in Kentucky give the President's faction of the party useful recruits, but these gains were offset by losses elsewhere.

Modern Republicanism, like liberalism in the Democratic party, is not a well-defined body of doctrine; it is a tendency and a point of view. The remaking of the party is a pragmatic affair and must be worked out within the party, but Mr. Eisenhower has shown no inclination to intervene in party primaries or even to withhold his endorsement from candidates of sharply contrary views. He seems to rely rather on the hope that during eight years in office, he will gradually convert his fellow Republicans.

This process of conversion by example and osmosis has produced no startling results during the past four years. Senator Bender, the President's most spectacular convert, was rebuked rather than rewarded by Ohio Republicans for his defection from the old-fashioned orthodoxy. Mr. Eisenhower's tenure in office has rescued the party from the blight of its fanatical extremists in the McCarthy-Jenner faction, but otherwise it seems doubtful if another four years will make any major changes in the party leadership and outlook.

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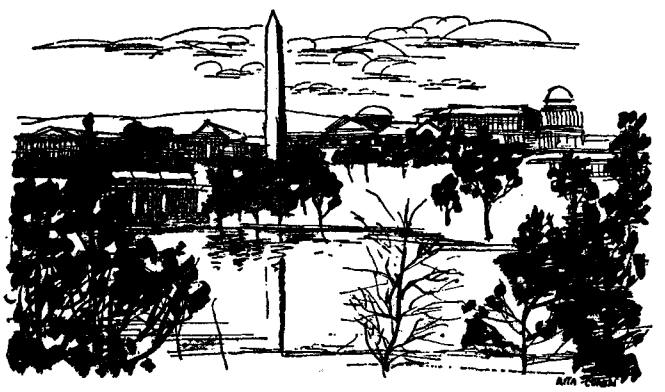
The President's great victory may indeed in some areas delay rather than advance the party's reorientation. This year, he again attracted the more conservative Southerners who have looked to Governor Shivers of Texas and Senator Byrd of Virginia for leadership, and at the same time he managed to win great numbers of Negro voters, notably in the cities of the Southern and border states, who are most dissatisfied with Southern conservatism. Logically, it would seem, the Republican party should move in one of two directions. It should either take a strong civil rights position which would outflank the liberal Democrats and consolidate the new Republican strength in the Negro community or else it should align itself with the conservative Southern Democrats and build a real Republican organization in the South. Mr. Eisenhower's success, however, in capturing the support of both Southern Tories and Southern Negroes simultaneously may postpone such a choice indefinitely.

THE ELECTION has similarly blurred rather than defined the outlook for the Democratic party. It was in no sense a ratification of Senator Johnson's moderate policies. If an election is not a clear referendum on a President's policies, it is even less a decision on the merits of either party's Congressional leadership. Senator Clements, the party whip in the Senate and Mr. Johnson's chief assistant during these past four years, was defeated for reelection in Kentucky while Senator Morse, the most articulate dissenter to Mr. Johnson's policies, won decisively in Oregon.

Yet since the Presidential election had more the character of a vote of confidence in Mr. Eisenhower than a referendum on the issues, the policy of moderation pursued by the Democratic Congressional leadership during the past four years cannot be said to have been repudiated. Mr. Johnson is therefore safe in interpreting the election to suit his own pre-conceptions.

The Northern liberal Democrats nevertheless intend to take the opposite side of the argument and press for a more aggressive course looking forward to 1960. There have been suggestions that this sharpening of friction between the divergent wings of the party may lead either to an open cleavage of an irreconcilable nature or the breakup of the party altogether. How, it is asked, can the Democrats continue to be at one and the same time the party of Senator Eastland and Senator Humphrey? of Harry Flood Byrd and G. Mennen Williams?



The answer is that both parties always look more divided than they act. For nearly twenty years, the Willkie-Dewey Republicans and the Taft Republicans marched in the political wilderness together, hating one another all the time but never breaking their partisan bonds. The Democrats, for all their internal differences, are likely to continue to march in lockstep for a long time to come.

PRACTICING politicians live by accommodation to the unthinkable and compromise of the irreconcilable. They make broad and generous allowances for the respective pressures and interests each must represent. The Democrats, moreover, rightly or wrongly, anticipate party victory in 1960 when Mr. Eisenhower retires. This optimism is certain to spawn Presidential aspirations in the hearts of countless Governors and Senators. The nomination of a united party, needless to say, is worth considerably more than the nomination of a hopelessly divided party.

The outlook for the Democrats, therefore, is for another four years of confused and rather conservative Democratic action in Congress while the party searches for a new Presidential candidate. The liberals who have announced their intention to renew the civil rights struggle in the Senate on opening day face bleak prospects. They are badly outnumbered in Congress. The retirement of Mr. Stevenson from active party leadership deprives them of their most eloquent spokesman as well as of the putative candidate they had in the interim after the 1952 defeat. Mr. Johnson, who is among the goodly company of Presidential hopefuls, may be counted upon to try to obfuscate their issues by ingenious compromise and soften their wrath by many kind words. The clean realignment along doctrinal lines or even the emphatic reorientation of party policy is likely to be extremely difficult if not impossible to achieve.

There are tides of change moving in the nation's political life. The restlessness of the Negro voters, the rise in power of the suburbs, the changing character of the farm economy, and the decay of the Democratic coalitions in the great cities all presage great alterations in national politics. The political leaders of both parties, however, for different reasons are more likely to try to obscure and deflect rather than clarify and channel these pressures for changes in the years immediately ahead.

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BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR A JUST MAN

I ATTENDED a party last evening. The birthday child was the Reverend Arthur J. Brown, a venerable Presbyterian minister. There were one hundred candles on the cake.

Dr. Brown, rounding out a full century of devoted service to his church and country, remains a striking figure, wise and witty and brimming with good sense. He addressed the guests (without a manuscript, mind you) with the sapience of a prophet and the bite of a good newspaper columnist. One of his friends, a professor of English, remarked that over many years he had never known Dr. Brown to write or utter a badly-tailored sentence. On his hundredth birthday the perfectionist was in good form.

He began by recalling his first public address, made at the age of six. The opening sentence of that speech went something like this: "Perchance you wonder where a boy of my years finds the courage to face an audience of this size." Ninety-four years later, Dr. Brown said, the sentence again came in handy.

The centenarian, as was appropriate, spoke on his life and times. I think he surprised everyone by saying that despite our gargantuan problems we live in a better world than the one he was born into.

He gave some examples. A century ago, religion as an intellectual force was simply non-existent. The anti-religious bias of the savants of those days may seem unbelievably naive to us now, but remember it was a period of overwhelming (and foolish) optimism about the perfectibility of man. In the years since, persecutions and wars, inhumanity on a massive scale and the dreadful self-knowledge learned at Dachau and Buchenwald have taught even the stiff-necked something about Original Sin.

Dr. Brown, who has served the Lord since the days of his youth, has lived long enough to see the revival of Protestant theology regarded as the most exciting development in the academic world. The sniffy anti-supernaturalism of the era he grew up in seems not only passé but déclassé today. The death of religion as a social and intellectual force was reported frequently in the days of his youth. Today, the reports seem to have been exaggerated.

Dr. Brown spoke of the tremendous advances made in the field of social welfare. When he was young, talk about exploitation and the grinding of the poor was more than rhetorical. The sweatshop was an accepted institution; child labor was commonplace. Long, long hours, low, low pay and impossible working conditions were the rule rather than the exception. The road to the present was long and rocky. Each step was fought bitterly. But Dr. Brown has lived long enough to see most of the dreams the reformers dreamed brought to fulfillment.

He was one of the original trustees of the Church Peace Union, organized by Andrew Carnegie in 1914, and through the years, with his fellow trustees, Protestant, Catholic and Jewish, has worked long and hard for a world peace founded on justice and brotherhood. (He continues to serve as Treasurer of the Union.) War still menaces the world and indeed total destruction hangs over us like a sword, but, for all that, Dr. Brown still finds the heart to point out that one hundred years ago there were no peace organizations. War was regarded as natural to man. Today the number of organizations and individuals working for peace is legion.

When Dr. Brown was born, slavery was an accepted American institution. Later his father was killed in action fighting the Civil War. He grew up the fatherless child of a man killed in a war over slavery. Now, these many years later, he has lived long enough to see the "separate-but-equal" doctrine—the halfway house between slavery and full freedom—stricken from law and crumbling in fact.

One hundred years ago, vice and drunkenness were great problems. They still are, of course. But the red-light districts once found in every American city have generally disappeared. Drinking may be more widespread. It is not necessarily more pernicious than it was when the WCTU and Total Abstinence leagues won general support by pointing to the thousands of broken homes and impoverished families whose troubles could be traced to a bibulous father.

When Dr. Brown was a child, diseases which have since disappeared were commonplace. Infant mortality rates were high. Maternity deaths were not exceptional. The care of the mentally ill was primitive. All that has changed. And one could go over the various fields of human endeavor one by one and mark similar changes for the better—in education, law, politics.

All is not lost. The world is still worth saving. True progress is always possible. The good man's efforts are never wasted and the world feeds on the goodness in men, not their evil. These are truisms. But when Arthur Judson Brown, carrying his years and wisdom as lightly as the angel Gabriel, made these points, everyone listened.

In Dr. Brown's presence, all the real powers on earth and in heaven seem to be on the side of man. It is as if the Lord spared this wonderful old man so we could all see the true power and strength of those who live by His word.

JOHN COGLEY.

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The Achievement of Cocteau

MARTIN TURNELL

ALTHOUGH we are inclined to think of Cocteau as a virtuoso who has practiced all or nearly all the arts, this is not how he himself sees the matter. He maintains that there is only one art or rather that all art is a form of poetry. He divides his own work into six categories, but instead of labeling them poetry, novels, plays, criticism, drawing and films, he labels them *poésie, poésie de roman, poésie de théâtre, poésie critique, poésie graphique* and *poésie cinématographique.*

His critical writings are the best introduction to his imaginative work. His theory of poetry is not strikingly original, but he has refurbished accepted theories and presented them in a fresh dress. He has a very real respect for the French classical tradition and the French classics, but his central tenet is derived from the poets of the later nineteenth century. All poetry, he thinks, is 'vision.' The artist sees something which is 'invisible' to the ordinary run of men: this explains the difficulty and scandal of the new work. The people are not yet ripe for the new vision: it is only later that the genuine work of art yields its secret to its audience.

In his theoretical writings Cocteau emphasizes the importance of both craftsmanship and the visionary element. It is, indeed, a perfectly legitimate insistence on craftsmanship and the use of fresh imagery to bring it home to the reader which makes some of his most serious pronouncements sound like smart epigrams: "Art is science made flesh." "A masterpiece is a game of chess which ends in checkmate." "Poetry means exactness, a number." "Poetry imitates a reality of which our world only possesses an intuition." "True realism consists of showing surprising things which habit hides with a dustcover and prevents us from seeing."

The concrete illustrations that he chooses add considerably to the force of his general observations: "A Stendhal or a Balzac . . . try before everything else to hit the bulls-eye. They succeeded nine times out of ten, no matter how. It is this 'no matter how' . . . this way of putting the rifle to their shoulder, aiming and firing fast and straight that I call style."

"A Flaubert only thinks of the manner of putting the rifle to his shoulder. The target does not matter. He treats his weapon with care. The woman who runs the shooting gallery *turns her back on the targets* and gazes at him with admiration. What a splendid fellow! What a sportsman! What style! It does not matter to her whether the marksman hits the bulls-eye so long as he keeps his rifle to his shoulder for a long time, holds it gracefully, and above all does not get through the job too quickly."

IT IS impossible not to be impressed by the brilliance of Cocteau's own performance. The image of the marksman is curiously appropriate. Every time Cocteau fires, down come the clay pipes, paper flowers and dolls which seem to adorn every shooting gallery at every fair in France. It is when we come to examine the results of the performance that doubts arise. We begin to wonder whether the prizes were really worth all the skill that he used to win them, whether the glittering imagery is not after all an alibi which conceals an absence of vision, whether in short he is not a victim of precisely the same weakness that he detects in Flaubert—the disparity between the extraordinary technical accomplishment and the relative poverty of the experience which emerges.

Cocteau has been at pains to convince his readers that he never repeats himself, that every work is a fresh start, a new problem which demands a new solution. The works that he has produced during the past forty years appear so varied that we feel doubtful at first whether they can have anything in common beyond the fact that they are all by the same man. When we look more closely, however, we find that certain themes are constantly recurring. They are not new; they are closely related to one another, mingling and overlapping in productions which on the surface seem as different from one another as they could well be. The themes which recur most frequently are illusion and reality, enchantment and disenchantment, order and disorder, and death. Illusion and reality is the theme of *Orphée, Les Monstres sacrés, Les Enfants terribles* and *La Belle et la bête;* enchantment and disenchantment the theme of plays founded on legend like *The Knights of the Round Table* and *Renaud et Armide;* order and disorder the theme of *The Infernal Machine* and *Les Parents terribles.*

What is most striking about all these works, however, is not simply the pervasiveness of death, but a

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morbid preoccupation with death, a sense that the author is on the side of death against the forces of life. In *Orphée* the mirror marks the dividing line between illusion and reality, but on the other side of the mirror lies death which suggests, unmistakably, an equation of life with illusion, death with reality. In *The Infernal Machine* and *Les Parents terribles* disorder is created by an incestuous relation between mother and son, and order is only restored by the suicide of the mother. For in the last resort love, happiness and security always turn out to be based on illusion or to conceal a secret disorder, but the price of reality or the restoration of order is invariably death.

I do not want to underestimate the extraordinary technical accomplishment of Cocteau's plays or their entertainment value, but I think that we must go on to conclude that the greatest illusion of all is the much advertised 'vision.' What we are in fact offered is not 'vision,' but a highly ingenious game, a rapid shifting of the counters 'illusion' and 'reality,' 'enchantment' and 'disenchantment,' 'order' and 'disorder.' The game is spiced by the inclusion of a few surrealist props like the disappearing horse or the appearance of Death and her assistants in *Orphée* and the talking flower in *The Knights of the Round Table,* but behind the décors is only a void.

The fact that Cocteau should have devoted so much of his time to brightening up the classics and re-writing medieval legends with a modern slant seems to me to be both symptomatic and disconcerting. One of the most serious weaknesses of his work is that most of it is derivative, that the substance always comes from someone or somewhere else, and that Cocteau's contribution does consist so largely in modernizing it, decking it out with unexpected images or presenting an old story in a new setting.

THE SAME weaknesses appear in a slightly less obvious form in the poetry and the drawings. Maurice Sachs described his poetry as "an extraordinary mixture of petals torn from the most diverse flowers which have all withered in his hands and no longer have any definite scent." It is a hard saying, but there can be no doubt that the poetry does contain a great number of borrowings from a variety of poets from Ronsard, Racine and Malherbe down to Apollinaire, Max Jacob and Valéry. That is why it dazzles but does not move, why the final verdict on *Crucifixion,* which appeared in 1946 and is the most ambitious of all his poems, must be that it is a brilliant performance and not a great poem. Cocteau's friends have suggested that his drawings influenced Picasso. The illustrations that he did for *Opium* and *Les Enfants terribles* are fascinating, but it is impossible to believe that without the example of Picasso they would ever have been done.

"As soon as it was discovered, the cinema was used by commercially-minded people in the service of outmoded conceptions which delayed its development. People simply photographed stage plays." This observation was made in 1920. It illustrates the remarkable keenness of Cocteau's intelligence. He saw at once that the cinema was an entirely new medium with immense possibilities—a medium which clearly drew on the other arts but was capable of doing things that lay beyond their range, was in fact a medium in its own right and not a mere extension of the theater. The part played by technical skill, craftsmanship and virtuosity could not fail to attract a man whose first contact with the arts, whose first admiration had been the adroitness of the acrobat. Cocteau's relation to the cinema, however, goes deeper even than that. It is impossible not to perceive that the texture of a play like *Orphée* or a novel like *Les Enfants terribles* is essentially *cinematic* or that their adaptation for the screen was a natural development of Cocteau's art. For Cocteau's tendency to see life in terms of images, gesture and movement made the cinema his obvious medium. His films are rightly admired. *L'Éternel retour, La Belle et la bête* and *Orphée* contain sequences of extraordinary beauty, but all of them are considerably more brilliant in their parts than as wholes. For nothing that Cocteau has done in the cinema has produced a completely satisfying work of art which can be compared with the classics of the great directors of our time.

"The role of novelist becomes him ill," wrote a French critic a few years ago. It is as easy to find fault with Cocteau's novels as with his poetry or his plays, but they are in some respects the most satisfying part of his achievement. Miss Crosland tells us that each of his three novels has its particular admirers. I am bound to say that *Les Enfants terribles* seems to me to be not only his finest novel but his finest book, and that the two earlier novels are no more than skilfully placed 'approach shots' which lead up to it. *Le Grand écart* is what might be called the adolescent story and clearly owes a good deal to *Le Diable au corps.* It describes the life at an academic coaching establishment of Jacques Forestier who becomes involved with an engaging prostitute, is thrown over by her and attempts to commit suicide. There is a certain amount of autobiography in the book, but Jacques is something more than a partial portrait of the artist. He is a first sketch of the *enfant terrible* which turns into a full length portrait in *Thomas the Impostor.*

Cocteau's second novel, as we know, was based on his war experiences. It takes us into a world which lies midway between 'illusion' and 'reality.' What gives it its strange illusory atmosphere is the creation of Thomas himself. He is an adolescent who pretends to be related to a French general as he pretends to be a member of the armed forces. His imposture is a double one. He

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trifles with the affections of a noble mother and her daughter who become rivals for his favors. He cares for neither of them and sighs with relief when their visit to his unit at the front comes to an end and he can return to life with his comrades. For at bottom his heart is cold. This is the basic flaw in the novel. Thomas is an amusing puppet and no more. When he falls to a sniper's bullet we cannot feel that it is of more importance or more moving than the vanishing of a wraith.

THE SUPERIORITY of *Les Enfants terribles* to the two earlier novels lies largely in the fact that instead of alternating between fantasy and actuality Cocteau succeeds in creating a poetic world or, more precisely, a world of poetic nightmare. The opening scene with the schoolboys playing in the snow outside the school in the evening, the sinister figure of Dargelos, the ring-leader of the 'bad boys' who knocks the hero out with a snow ball, the 'white' ball which already looks forward to the 'black' ball of poison which he will send to Paul at the end of the book and which produces the tragedy—all this possesses a strange hallucinatory quality and sets the tone of the book. Paul and Elisabeth are the two *enfants terribles,* the brother and sister who are left orphans. They are devoted to one another, are always quarreling, always pretending to hate one another. They create a world of their own into which their friends are gradually absorbed—a world with its own language, its own proportions, all centering round the mysterious game they play with one another in the private world into which they turn the 'room.' Elisabeth makes a rich marriage which threatens the private world, but her husband is killed immediately after the wedding in a car accident, and the private world is restored. All this time Paul's bosom friend, Gérard, has been in love with Elisabeth who despises him. Paul himself is in love with Agathe and, though he does not know it, is loved in return. We come to the 'twist' which occurs in most of Cocteau's work. Elisabeth may be technically 'pure' but she is in love with her brother. Diabolically, she misleads the other three about their sentiments for one another, and marries Gérard off, unhappily, to Agathe. Paul discovers the trick and poisons himself. Elisabeth finds him dying and shoots herself.

Cocteau, as I have already suggested, excels in creating a certain kind of nightmarish horror. The most arresting pages of *Le Grand écart* are those describing Jacques Forestier's state of mind as he lies between life and death, after he too has taken poison. The closing pages of *Les Enfants terribles* are far more powerful. They are also a perfect illustration of Cocteau's handling of the theme of illusion and reality, of what happens when illusion is dissipated and reality breaks in:

"Now he was spent, his head fell back. She thought the end had come, put the revolver to her temple and pulled the trigger. With a roaring din, one of the screens crashed on her as she fell. The walls were breached, the secret shrine exposed, raw, violated, a public spectacle to the eyes watching Paul in the snow-shrouded windows . . .

"While Agathe stood dumb, transfixed with terror, staring at the bloodstained corpse that was Elisabeth, Paul saw them, splintered in the frosty panes, their noses, cheeks, red hands. He recognized their features, their capes, their woolen mufflers. He looked for Dargelos and could not find him; all he could see was that one vast gesture of Dargelos's lifted arm.

'Paul! Paul! Help! Help!'

"But who was she to call upon his name? What part or lot has she in him? His eyes are quenched. The thread is broken. The Room has flown; all that remains is the foul breath of poison, and one small stranded figure, the figure of some woman, dwindling, fading, disappearing in the distance."

THE BALANCE sheet is, inevitably, a somewhat disappointing one. Cocteau has been one of the most colorful, one of the most picturesque figures of our time, but he has failed signally to produce a masterpiece. He is, as Maurice Sachs acutely said of him, an *animator* rather than a creative artist. He has known everybody who was anybody; he broke down barriers, established contacts, tried out new tricks, perceived unsuspected relations between the different arts, acted as a stimulant and 'kept things moving.' It is this which gives a kind of unity not so much to the man and his work as to the writer and the public figure. The left-wing radicals and the *avant garde,* who can hardly have admired his bourgeois origins, accepted him not because they felt that they had anything to learn from him, but because they realized rightly that he was the most marvelous publicity agent who would enable them to infiltrate into circles which at that time were closed to them and to their ideas. 'Charm,' 'enchantment' and 'magician' are the terms most frequently applied to him. He has, indeed, been a superb entertainer, but he seems to me to be much more important as a figure, as a propagandist for art than as an artist. For in the last resort the absence of genuine creative vitality is a fatal defect. His work is not seminal; he has prevented stagnation, but he has not started anything and has had no positive influence on any of the arts that he has practiced. His work is already beginning to date and much of it already wears a slightly tawdry, slightly tinsel look. I find it difficult to believe that it will long outlast the traditional magician's spell.

(This is the second of two articles by Mr. Turnell on Jean Cocteau.)

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THE SCREEN

ALL-AMERICAN

IN THE 1949 remake of "Little Women" June Allyson made Jo a more typical American girl than Katharine Hepburn had done in the better version of 1933 or than Louisa May Alcott had concocted in the original. Since then Miss Allyson has become on the screen, for a very large number of movie goers, *the* American Girl. Now, with her appearance in two new musicals, she makes a bid to become queen of the remakes too: both films are successful comedies of the 1930's that have been refurbished with color, music, CinemaScope and new casts, but which are content with the same old ideas.

That neither of the films is especially merry is not Miss Allyson's fault; she has starred in bright, cheery musicals before; and, in straight dramas, she has also played well the wifely role (to Jimmy Stewart, Alan Ladd and even, on one misalliance, to José Ferrer). But these two unhilarious musicals require June to portray a wife who doesn't take marriage very seriously—certainly not the expected screen role for the American Girl.

In "You Can't Run Away from It" June plays an heiress who is kidnapped by her father immediately after her marriage to a fortune hunter. Being as willful as papa, she gives him the slip and starts on the long trek from California to Texas, where she hopes to rejoin her impatient groom. On this travelogue she soon teams up with an out-of-work reporter (Jack Lemmon) who recognizes at first sight both a pretty girl and a good news story. Movie goers who saw Claudette Colbert and Clark Gable in Frank Capra's comedy of 1934, called "It Happened One Night," probably remember only the famous hitch-hiking and "Walls of Jericho" scenes. "You Can't Run Away from It" tries to re-do *all* the amusing incidents from the original (which was based on a story by Samuel Hopkins Adams), but somehow the jokes about the open road, motel, bus and jalopy don't seem as funny now as they did in Depression Days, and the success of the film depends upon these jokes.

Although June Allyson and Jack Lemmon try very hard and get an occasional assist in a song with Stubby Kaye or in a laugh-provoking episode with Paul Gilbert, they do not get much help from Director Dick Powell, who is pretty heavy-handed about the whole thing. Neither does the music come to the aid of the story, which certainly needs a lift. In fact, the plot gets so confused toward the end that one never does figure out how June got rid of her first husband in order to line up with Jack. And that, surely, is no situation for the American Girl.

JUNE has a difficult time straightening things out in the remake of "The Women," too. But the character she plays in this old Clare Boothe Luce opus, now called "The Opposite Sex," is a matron who is not too bright about marriage, despite ten years of being married to a theatrical producer. As soon as she hears that her husband is having an affair with a show girl (Joan Collins), she runs off to Reno to get a divorce. Then, after a strict lecture from her one good friend (Ann Sheridan), she works like everything to get her husband back again.

As a movie, "The Opposite Sex" is so overdecorated with lush New York and Reno high life that its cast hardly have a chance to stress characterization. One gets the idea that most of these women (Dolores Gray, Ann Miller, Agnes Moorehead *et al.*) are expensively dressed and thoroughly vicious, but the picture never searches very deep. The musical numbers, well handled by the cast and guest stars, are just one more added attraction.

But the added attraction that breaks the camel's back in this picture is the men. The first movie version of "The Women" stuck to the play's maleless cast and showed a world of vitriolic females (except for Norma Shearer in the June Allyson role) into which a man would be embarrassed to go. By letting June's husband (Leslie Nielsen) get into the act in "The Opposite Sex," the story takes on an unintended, unexpected and unwelcome silliness.

INTENTIONALLY silly—and successful at it—is "The Great American Pastime," a delightful little film about a man who spends a whole summer managing a Little League Baseball Team. With the simplicity and charm of an inspired Boy Scout, Tom Ewell plays the man whose enthusiasm runs riot during the spring, wanes during the warm months and disappears with a whimper by autumn.

Among the many things Tom didn't count on were so much advice from neighbors, each of whom thought his own son should be the pitcher, the lukewarm interest of his own wife (Anne Francis), the attitude of his own son (Rudy Lee) who joined up with another team, the over-enthusiasm of a widow (Ann Miller) for whose little boy baseball was supposed to take the place of a father, and, of course, the vicissitudes of the game itself when so many moppets were involved. Under Herman Hoffman's direction, the cast come through with droll performances that win plenty of laughs, and Tom Ewell is in fine style. Although a little of Ewell goes a long way, Nathaniel Benchley's script is so consistently funny that it keeps the audience chuckling by its chronicle of Ewell's painful ventures with the great American pastime.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

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OF NOTE

ENGLISH AT MASS

A RECENT editorial in the North-Central Louisiana *Register,* publication of the diocese of Alexandria, La., (P.O., Box 589, Alexandria, La.) discusses the use of the vernacular in the Liturgy:

Fifteen hundred years have passed since St. Augustine wrote his famous formula for fruitful controversy: "In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity."

From all appearances that formula is being applied nowadays to the great debate over the liturgy. You have noticed in press releases during the past few weeks the different stands being taken by various Church leaders, especially in the matter of use of the vernacular in the Mass and the Breviary. Bishop John J. Wright of Worcester, Mass., and Cardinal Gaetano Cicognani, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, outstanding Church leaders both, have spoken out in favor of continued use of Latin. Lined up on the other side publicly are the directors of the North American Liturgy Conference, and privately a number of Bishops, priests, editors, and Church leaders.

At this point in the debate, it will be well to note that the Church has not yet defined officially what she shall do, and for the time being the status quo obtains: we must continue to use Latin as fruitfully as possible. Moreover, the Church officially is not bound to make any changes in the liturgy within any specified time; she is bound generally by divine law to adopt those measures that will foster the salvation of her people. The whole gamut of arguments pro-vernacular and con-vernacular points up the immense freedom we enjoy as children of the Church. Latin and English are not bound up *essentially* with her mission. We may argue the relative merits of either, voice our opinion, and win encouragement rather than reproval. For the Church wants to know the needs of her children.

In this particular debate, the crux of the question seems to lie in a desire to preserve unity on the one hand (for those who favor Latin) and a desire to foster most effectively the care of souls (through English) on the other hand. Many of us will be disappointed that such great insistence is being placed on an external like Latin in order to preserve a basic unity internationally —a catholicity. Lest we lose patience, let us note that exaggerated nationalism and racism have been among the greatest problems of the past one hundred years. Would the Church be prudent in giving Germans their German, and the French their French as long as these two peoples are given to petty national jealousies? Or to give Americans English as long as we look upon the Spanish south of the border as inferior? Latin does serve to unite the children of the Church—at least externally—if they will not be united first and foremost through love. And that is something at least. In a large measure we merit what we get or do not get, including the vernacular in the liturgy.

We would like to see the Breviary (the liturgical prayerbook of the Church) and the Mass—the Mass of the Catechumens, that is—put into English. Admittedly there are difficulties. For the moment, let us look just at the Mass.

First, relative to unity, Latin does serve the purpose of binding us together internationally. But this unity can be achieved in other ways. Americans generally are becoming more international minded by the day. There seems to be little danger that we would ever seek to establish an "American" Church. Besides, the Mass is already being offered in a score of languages, from Latin to Ukrainian to Greek.

The argument that a good translation suffices sounds good at first—until you realize how incongruous it is to have the priest turn around, address the congregation with "Dominus vobiscum" (obviously meant to be a two-way conversation), only to receive a reply from an eight-year old boy, "Et come speeree 2-2-oh" —while the people remain silent. If the Mass of the Catechumens is meant to be a communication—living, real, aloud—between priest and people, then let us communicate! . . .

And then, of course, some argue that God understands even if we do not. Surely He does . . . even the garbled Latin of pint-size altar boys. But the Mass of the Catechumens is not only a dialogue with God; it is primarily a horizontal communication between priest and people. And, be it conversation with priest or with God, much would be gained if it were intelligible.

Another one. Through Latin we come into contact with two thousand years of Church history. Valid, if you know Latin. Otherwise it is going from one unknown to another unknown, and the net result is unknown.

In short, we would like to see the priest come out for Mass, fix the chalice on the altar, descend to a lectern at the Communion rail, and lead the Mass of the Catechumens there, in English. Preparatory prayers, readings from the Scripture, announcements, sermon, the Creed—all in the vernacular and in intelligible dialogue with the people.

The Mass of the Faithful—Offertory, Consecration, Communion—is basically an *action,* not a communication, between priest and people, and hence could be performed in English, Latin, Greek, or Chinese, without suffering and the common objections voiced against an unintelligible Mass of the Catechumens.

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COMMUNICATIONS

"THE BISHOPS' STATEMENT"

Philadelphia, Pa.

TO the Editors: *Re* your comment on the Bishops' statement [Nov. 30]: you praise its support of the UN but say nothing about the statement's praise of the President's "vigorous leadership."

It seems to me that the question of "Presidential leadership" is open to much debate and, in view of your many editorials on the lack of such leadership, one might well expect you to question this part of the Bishops' statement.

I was disturbed by the Bishops' praise of Presidential leadership; I was dismayed to find The Commonweal evading the issue; I am determined that one voice, at least, will cry out against it.

ELMER PAUL BROCK.

"THE NEGRO VOTE"

Notre Dame, Ind.

TO the Editors: Your editorial rejoicing in the Democratic party's loss of the Negro vote [Nov. 16] was shocking to me in its shortsightedness and naivete, for two reasons:

1) Despite what good a protest vote may do, it is finally irresponsible for the Negro or any minority group to cast its ballot solely in protest on one issue isolated from all others, especially when—as in this instance—he could do so only through a "guilt by association" logic in finding a persecutor to vote against. (With Senator Eastland still firmly in the Senate Judiciary chairmanship, no doubt many Negroes now realize that you must be in Mississippi to vote against Eastland.) Certainly the difference in what advancement the Negro might make under a second Eisenhower Administration or would have under Stevenson was in no way so clearly unbalanced in the Republicans' favor that this issue could outweigh the Administration's failure to develop and implement a foreign policy, its refusal to even consider the moral issue in the danger of H-bomb testing to the human race, and its consistent preoccupation with budgeting and economizing when huge segments of our society —farmers, small business, labor victims of automation and layoffs, the aged, and all who are losing in natural resources giveaways—are suffering in human needs which under Roosevelt and Truman ordinarily transcended purely economic considerations. I would even say that it was in no wise clear enough to outweigh the fact that one candidate was a convalescent part-time President, prisoner of his advisers, and obviously intellectually incapable of initiating policy and ideas, while the other was a politician of unusual integrity, healthy, and capable of thinking, seeing, and acting intelligently in complex situations in his own right. This is to say that the defeat of Stevenson could in no way straitjacket Eastland; as a protest it could only be a wild haymaker as likely, ultimately, to be self-destructive as not.

2) The facts concerning the political parties and civil rights give the lie to any effort to identify the Republican Party with the Negro's interests. Mr. Stevenson's record as governor of Illinois and his campaign statements indicate a conviction that the Administrative branch of government has an obligation to protect and extend civil rights where they are denied. He spoke—even in the South—forthrightly on the Supreme Court decision. Contrarily, the General consistently opposed integration while in the Army, repeatedly refused to provide any Administration leadership in civil rights in his first Administration, and consistently passed the buck when queried about the Supreme Court decision, which he is constitutionally obliged to enforce when the Court has spoken. And during the campaign he let it be known that at all points between Washington and Miami he would be silent altogether on civil rights. So, looking for an issue, Chairman Hall appropriated Truman's Armed Forces integration, a long-planned D.C. integration program, and a Supreme Court decision to hide Republican failures to do anything about civil rights. In truth, however, quite contrarily, there were even some regressions under Eisenhower's Administration, as in the quiet decision to permit Federal contracts to go to segregating business concerns, reversing a policy Truman had established.

And while I agree wholeheartedly that Southern Democrats in politics are in many instances unsavory, at the same time they are, we must realize if we would be realistic, but the reflection of the more vocal Southern electorate and in many cases are quite as liberal as they dare be if they would remain in office. Even this has its justification, for when a Folsom or Clement or a Senator George is defeated, we may be sure his successor in these turbulent days will be a Talmadge —whether he be Democrat or Republican. In fact, from my experience of Republican politics in the South, there is no Republican leader in or out of office south of Senator-elect Cooper who promises the Negro any better than he has received from the Eastlands and Talmadges. Left alone, the Eastlands are paternal; Southern Republican leaders are almost universally unconcerned with the Negro except as a cheap industrial or agricultural labor force and a market. Republican interests in the Negro—from cotton mills to sugar plantations to mail order houses—are to the Negro's detriment, and Southern Old Guard GOPs can be expected to act accordingly in Washington

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should they ever get there. It is significant that even Eisenhower-appointees in the South have been totally passive about working to secure the Negro the right to vote.

In the North there is no argument at all. While Republicans show election year interest in civil rights, the real leaders in Civil Rights progress have always been Democrats—from Roosevelt to Truman, Douglas, Humphrey, Wagner, Lehman, Mennen Williams, and, if you please, a seven-ninths Democratic appointed Supreme Court. Normally, Northern Republican majorities in Congress do nothing to initiate civil rights legislation and invariably sabotage what they are forced to consider, as they did the education bill this year.

Finally, as far as the Eastlands are concerned, aren't we faced with a terrible regional dilemma which has become, for the Republicans, purely a political opportunity for splitting the Democratic Party? T. Coleman Andrews says, according to *The Reporter* (Nov. 1, 1956): ". . . It was the Supreme Court desegregation decision that brought his final disillusionment with the Eisenhower Administration. 'Was that really an Admnistration decision?' a reporter asked. 'Of course it was,' Andrews said. 'I know who put Mr. Warren in office and I know the circumstances under which he was put there.' " If this needs explanation, another States Righter who served the Eisenhower Administration for a time has said that Mr. Brownell's mission to California in 1952 was first to split the Democrats, then to bring Warren to the Court. Consequently, the 1954 decision was reached, one which, ironically except through political lenses, the Republican Administration has not enforced.

It seems to me that to rejoice over Negro defections to the Republican Party is in a small way like rejoicing over the protest of the Hungarian people. A protest has been registered, but to what gain? This is as shortsighted as Mr. O'Connor's unqualified endorsement of NAACP organizing efforts in the South which appeared in The Commonweal last winter. Their greatest result thus far has been to accelerate foreclosures, unemployment, and economic boycott against Negroes who joined up, thereby increasing the exodus of Negroes from property-owning Southern serfdom to the proletarian Yankee slums, and the NAACP has made no provisions for the victims of their zeal.

There are many Faulkners in the South who must daily suffer the anguish of seeing the injustice of their fellow Southerners. Yet, they are Democrats all, not because they love Eastland—they do not—but because they believe in the Democratic party and know that only here will the Negro be served, North or South, for only here are people given initial consideration. And history bears them out, for at no time since Lincoln have the Republicans been leaders in civil rights progress.

There is no cause for rejoicing, but for pity—that the Negroes listened to Richard Nixon and not Mrs. Roosevelt.

WILLIAM H. SLAVICK.

Banning, Cal.

TO the Editors: Reading your comments on "The Negro Vote" [Nov. 16] prompts the following suggestion to the Democratic Party—that the "Southern" Democrats be read out of the party as they are actually Republicans in everything but name. Their stand on such things as civil rights, union security, minimum wages, etc. is certainly not that of the Democratic Party.

Whether a check of the historical record on other subjects would support the above opinion or not is a question.

With a majority of the voters registered Democratic, and with four years in which to retrench, now would seem an opportune time to make such a move. The Party could then present a simpler and less equivocal platform to the voters.

GEORGE J. WOLFE.

St. Paul, Minn.

TO the Editors: In your issue of Nov. 16, the apparent shift in the Negro vote away from the Democratic Party was introduced as a topic for editorial comment. It was stated that "Roosevelt and Truman are no longer on the Democratic ticket; James Eastland and Herman Talmadge, Earl Long and John Bell Williams are." This theme is further developed by the Commonweal editor to suggest that the liberal Democrat should be ashamed of his party, in the following terms, "If they face up to the hard facts, the liberal Democrats are in for some painful sessions. . . ." or "It may make the liberal Democrats wince, for example, to see just how many Negroes felt that a vote for Adlai Stevenson was a vote for James Eastland."

According to the records (accessible to the editor) an overwhelming majority of Republican Senators have voted consistently to preserve Senate Rule 22, the graveyard of all Civil Rights legislation. A majority of Democratic Senators have voted consistently to change Senate Rule 22. I wonder who should be ashamed about this? Perhaps we should all be ashamed for the Republican Party.

In the simplest terms, the key to Civil Rights was the straight Democratic ticket in 1956 because: 1) The Republicans in Congress will not give the few necessary votes needed to enact such legislation; 2) The Republican in the White House does not have the necessary leadership needed to implement such legislation (witness the fate of the Supreme Court decision on the issue of segregation).

J. SISSON.

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The Void, the Voyage, the Wide, Wide World

THE WHOLE VOYALD. By William Saroyan. Atlantic—Little, Brown. $3.75.

By WILLIAM J. SMITH

WILLIAM Saroyan has always been his own finest critic. A little too kindly, perhaps, but indefatigably dedicated. There is nothing that can be said of Saroyan that he himself has not already said. His own career has been of interest to him to the virtual exclusion of everything else. This sort of self-preoccupation in a writer is not necessarily a defect. Better and worse writers than Saroyan have been similarly self-centered, though not always so happily.

In his self-estimations, moreover, Saroyan manages a considerable degree of justness. For example, in a story entitled "The Sea and the Small Boy," after an extended review of the artist's day (which material seems to have turned many a quick buck for the artist in question) he says of himself, "I was glad the whole day, and I still am, more or less, but what comes of gladness? If a writer isn't sick, if he isn't mad, if he isn't in despair, what can he say? The things that I've been saying? What good are *they?* What do *they* mean? Well, man, let's not get any of this wrong. They don't mean anything."

It is possible that Saroyan is not referring to the entire corpus of his work here, and it is possible that he does not mean what he is saying—it is even remotely possible that he did not notice what he was saying. In any event, even a hostile critic might say that Saroyan was going too far here. His stories do mean something. Their meaning is deserving of respect. They mean that people can be glad and good and loving and look upon others as glad and good and loving. They mean that man can shed a tear that is not all grief and that a childlike capacity for wonder can be his greatest joy. As *facts* these contentions are indisputable. Facts, however, do not always carry literary conviction. The question is, whether, in his sentimental blur, the possible truth of what he is saying carries any weight. In an introductory "Writer's Declaration" Saroyan defends himself against the charge of sentimentality. Or, rather, he dismisses it with a simple denial: "I don't think my writing is sentimental . . . although it is a very sentimental thing to be a human being." But, then, are human beings nothing but sentimental? Or does it follow that if human beings are sentimental the writer must be, too? But, of course, Mr. Saroyan denies that he is.

Since Mr. Saroyan's sentimentality, in the eyes of the rest of the world at least, is fairly well established, the point is scarcely worth belaboring. In the title story of this collection a little boy is examining, with friendly interest, a lizard on a rock by the roadside. Nothing sentimental per se. Then the little boy says to the lizard, "Morning, little old lizard, old pal. How do you feel in the sun this morning, old stranger and friend?" The little boy immediately grows Mr. Saroyan's fine big black mustache.

In his introductory "Declaration" Mr. Saroyan makes much of the fact that he has, during his prolific twenty-year career, been "entirely free and independent." The vision this conjures up of the Forces of Darkness trying to coerce him into more acceptable channels of expression is awesome—those apostles of negativism, the editors of *Cosmopolitan, The Ford Times, Good Housekeeping, The Saturday Evening Post,* and *Swank* demanding raw and sordid tales of crime and sex and moral degeneracy and loss of religious faith and political disaffection. What Mr. Saroyan means by "free and independent," of course, is financially successful—as he happily admits. Nothing wrong with that. And why not, indeed? His stories are bright and honest and good-humored and short, and sometimes just a *little* bit sad. Sometimes they're even very good stories, in fact.

In a note to this volume Mr. Saroyan says that Voyald is a way of saying Void, Voyage, and World at the same time. On this it is impossible to comment further without unsettling the mind.

Paradox of an Englishman

SELECTED WRITINGS OF SYDNEY SMITH. Edited and with an Introduction by W.H. Auden. Farrar, Straus. $6.50.

By VIVIAN MERCIER

SYDNEY SMITH combined several characteristics usually regarded as incompatible: he managed to be witty and humane, happy and compassionate, Whiggish and Anglican. We can accept all of these paradoxes; the one thing hard to swallow is his being an Englishman. When Mr. Auden looks for polemical writers to compare with Smith, he can find only one Englishman — *Ecclesiastical Polity* Hooker—as against two Irishmen —Swift and Shaw, of course! I am surprised he did not mention Chesterton, though.

Since Chesterton was an Englishman, we must take Smith for one too, but the latter bears only one mark of his origin—his common sense. I mean "bears" quite literally, for the burden of Smith's common sense almost crushes Mr. Auden's anthology of him. Whereas Irish life swarms with absurdities and inequities which nobody defends but which nobody tries to abolish, people in England believe passionately in anomalies and yet can be argued out of their beliefs. Smith must therefore pour out twenty pages of limpid common sense to prove what nobody but an English-

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man could ever have doubted: namely, that those accused of felony have as much right to the aid of counsel as those charged with treason or simple misdemeanor.

In his younger days Sydney Smith was not quite so patient. The "Peter Plymley Letters," that brilliant series of articles (written c. 1807) in favor of Catholic Emancipation, abound in such Swiftian exaggerations as the following: "I have often thought, if *the wisdom of our ancestors* had excluded all persons with red hair from the House of Commons, of the throes and convulsions it would occasion to restore them to their national rights."

Yet even here he feels it his duty to rely heavily on common sense rather than on Swift's lunatic logic or Shaw's rabid reasoning. No wonder that after seventy pages of urbanity he remarks plaintively: "I now take a final leave of this subject of Ireland; the only difficulty in discussing it is a want of resistance, a want of something difficult to unravel, and something dark to illumine."

That he did find dark places to illumine in the England of his time will be evident to anyone who reads "Game Laws," "Spring Guns and Man Traps," and "Chimney Sweepers" in the present volume. Mr. Auden gives absolutely no bibliographical or chronological data about his selections, but I seem to remember that these three all come from the *Edinburgh Review,* which Smith helped to found. Among the *Edinburgh* pieces I also recall a favorable review of one of the earliest books advocating humane treatment of lunatics; Mr. Auden might well have included this.

It is hard to believe that some of the selections were made primarily for American readers. What can the "Letters to Archdeacon Singleton" mean in a country which does not permit an establishment of religion? How can we be expected to take sides in a palace revolution within the Church of England, especially as Smith, a Canon of St. Paul's, could hardly be thought impartial in his defense of cathedral chapters against the encroachments of bishops? Furthermore, what is the point of including twenty pages of jovial Smithian invective against the introduction of the secret ballot, unless it be to show that Smith had his share of the English love for anomaly, or that even Whigs can be reactionaries?

As Sydney Smith would no doubt point out if he were alive, this book should be a hundred pages shorter and three dollars cheaper. It is ridiculous to charge so much for material which has long been in the public domain. If Mr. Auden's editorial fee was outrageous enough to justify the price, then he could have afforded to farm out the supplying of an index and bibliographical notes to some needy Ph.D. candidate with a wife and child.

Still, we must forgive the editor a lot for his "Introduction," in which he defends the Whig tradition against its recent belittlers. Sydney Smith was the Regency equivalent of a Fabian Socialist or "parlor pink." England could have used many more Anglican clergymen of his type; fortunately, since English-

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men, unlike Irishmen, do respect common sense, many of his views prevailed.

In Mr. Auden's words: ". . . unattractive and shallow as one may feel so many liberals to be, how rarely on any concrete social issue does one find the liberal position the wrong one. Again, how often, alas, do those very philosophers and writers who have most astounded us by their profound insights into the human heart and human existence, dismay us by the folly and worse of their judgments on the issues of everyday life." Could even a Claudel find fault with Smith's stand on Catholic Emancipation, however much he might disagree with the motives which prompted it?

Fatal Ambiguity

GIOVANNI'S ROOM. By James Baldwin. Dial. $3.

By JOHN F. SULLIVAN

IN THE debate on artistic censorship, those who uphold the right of art to deal with "unwholesome" subjects are constantly being embarrassed by the appearance of works whose seriousness and sincerity are unquestionable, but whose artistic merits are not of the first class. Very likely the most celebrated recent example of such a work was "The Miracle," a film that no one wanted to argue was a supreme example of the art of the movie. What its defenders did argue, of course, was that its sincerity and seriousness were great enough to justify allowing it to be seen and judged on its artistic worth.

Something of the same situation recurs with James Baldwin's new novel, *Giovanni's Room,* though it is not likely to become a public scandal unless some enterprising paper-back publisher manages to entrap with it an unwary crusader for clean literature. But it does raise the prudential problem of whether raw sincerity and seriousness of purpose can justify this explicit treatment of a homosexual tragedy, when its merit as a work of art is not beyond question.

The dust jacket collection of critical praise for Mr. Baldwin's first novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain,* is ample evidence that "sincerity" and "naturalness" are this author's most notable qualities. In addition, he is blessed with a fine narrative talent and displays, in general, sound craftsmanship. *Giovanni's Room* is constructed with a high degree of economy and an inherently powerful technique. It is the story of David, a young American in Paris, who becomes infatuated, during the absence of his girl, Hella, with Giovanni, regarded as rather a prize by the circle of homosexuals in which he moves. David and Giovanni have an intense affair. But when Hella returns, David tries to put Giovanni out of his life and resume with Hella as though nothing had happened. As a result, the lives of all three are shattered.

The homosexual attachment is depicted at length, both through the David-Giovanni relationship and through secondary characters. But no amount of careful recording of detail or of poetic heightening of feeling can supply what is absent here—the understanding which is vital whether a character in fiction merely takes a walk or commits incest. When, as the novel closes, David seems to be on the verge of finding salvation through "the grace of God," the reader has an uneasy feeling that the closing pages of a Graham Greene novel have been bound up by mistake in these covers.

There is no question that David needs salvation; if he seems to deserve it less than Giovanni or Hella, that is not really a matter for human judgment. But in all the preceding pages of the novel, there is a fatal ambiguity about what sin has been committed, and by whom. Or rather, I suppose, sin is not really in question at all before those last pages. David is presented, in fact, as an unfeeling boor, who erred only in his brutal rejection of Giovanni. He is similarly guilty of a kind of social offense against Hella, for failing to tell her at once that he had become hopelessly oriented to homosexuality.

Mr. Baldwin certainly meant the reader to understand David as a tragic protagonist and to feel pity and terror at his fate. He seems also to have intended Giovanni and Hella to be, in their disparate ways, attractively depicted, though—perhaps only because the novel is told in the first person by David—a good deal more sympathy is demanded for Giovanni than for Hella. But it doesn't quite work out as Mr. Baldwin intended. What I felt was a kind of remote pity for Giovanni, much sympathy and respect for Hella, and little more than disgust with David.

And—here is the embarrassment that I spoke of—I suppose I must explain that my disgust has nothing to do with David's homosexuality. It is produced by his self-pity, his stupidity, his childishness, which would be the same if Giovanni were a woman of the same passions. A tragic figure can be anyone and do anything, provided he maintains some spark of human dignity.

Travels in Russia

THE MUSES ARE HEARD. By Truman Capote. Random. $3.

By JOSEPH M. DUFFY, JR.

IN THE nineteenth century it was not at all unusual for European visitors to the United States to record and publish their impressions of the young trans-Atlantic republic. The reasons for European interest in America were as obvious as they were varied. The spaciousness of the land, its natural rugged splendor, its savage aborigines—both noble and sinister—on the other side of the frontier touched the romantic imagination which was hemmed in and jaded by the limited, traditional European environment. The culture of Americans—their homes and public buildings, their speech and dress, their manners and morals—provoked perhaps the most intense curiosity about this rough, bustling,

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egalitarian society. Finally, of course, America was regarded with apprehensive wonder as a great laboratory in which new principles of political philosophy were being tested. Fiction of, for example, Irving, Cooper, Hawthorne, and Twain both satisfied and added to this curiosity about America.

In the twentieth century Russia has a position vis-à-vis Western Europe and America that America once had for Europe. We regard this remote and powerful land with a mixture of wonder and fear and want to know what the country looks like, how its citizens act, and how the government works. For at least a quarter of a century this inquisitiveness has been gratified at various levels. Like Europeans of the last century, Americans prefer the intimate view, the volume which gives them the opportunity to feel complacently superior; and they have with comfort read reports about Russian plumbing which does not work, automobiles which do not have a 1960 look, and about a *haute couture* which is not so high as Gimbel's Basement. Anyone who has spent any time at all in Russia comes back with notes for a book—whether he be the correspondent for the New York *Times* or a valet in the American Embassy in Moscow.

Truman Capote has more writing ability than the average domestic servant and he has been in Russia —though one does not know for how long. Mr. Capote, an idiosyncratic fiction writer of the Southern School, makes his debut here as a foreign correspondent. *The Muses Are Heard* is the story of eight days in the visit of the *Porgy and Bess* company to Russia in 1955. The book opens with the departure of the company from Berlin and concludes after their first performance —a disastrous one—in Leningrad. This is not a book about Russia but one about some Americans traveling in that country.

Since some explanation is necessary for the appearance of *The Muses Are Heard,* it is, I take it, an elaborate joke, a spiteful gesture against the members of the *Porgy and Bess* company. Mr. Capote was clearly aggravated by most of the people with whom he traveled, and this book is his revenge. Public revenge may take the form of a literary vehicle as satisfying for the audience as for the author. In this case, however, it is not, because the management of the *Porgy and Bess* company, the performers, and the various camp followers seem dull—typical fixtures from the American theatrical scene—and Capote here has neither the wit nor the the power to break these butterflies upon a wheel.

The Muses Are Heard has the same kind of interest as a Broadway column by Dorothy Killgallen and is of similar literary quality. While Mr. Capote scrupulously records the pretentiousness or boorishness of his companions or such details as the number of times a performer's dog dirties a train compartment, his Russian background is shadowy and, where it is described, almost always banal. Prices are high, we learn, hotels are badly furnished, people are afraid. *The Muses Are Heard* has a striking dust jacket with the title and author's name printed in English on the front and in Russian on the back. The cover has a gaudy handsomeness. Readers are cautioned against these blandishments: the contents of the book would not dignify a paper-back format. Long ago Mrs. Trollope wrote out of necessity, to maintain herself and her children; and her comments on America, malicious as they are, were made out of close acquaintance with her subject and even after a hundred and twenty years bristle with life and accuracy. But as for Truman Capote's effort, one's interest is not equal even to the duration of this book, short though it is.

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